

Canada Pension Plan

would double the benefits and to heck with what happened to the fund. Almost immediately the fund would start to go down, and very shortly it would be a matter of raising the rate of contribution; but the government of the day might decide to let another government worry about that, or let the fund go bust.

This act provides that that money cannot be taken out of the general treasury of this country. Therefore it is a wild hypocrisy to think in these terms. But perhaps, Mr. Chairman, it is not such a wild hypocrisy as one might think, because one must recognize that the provinces have a real stake in what happens. The provinces have in effect tacitly, if not specifically, consented. They know what is in this bill, and if they acquiesce in its passage they do so because they are not seriously protesting against it, nor are they demanding something which would result in their residents not being covered.

While I admit the clause now under consideration is stringent, one of the reasons for its inclusion is related to the fact that it will not only cover provincial constituents, but federal constituents or, in short, all the people in Canada no matter where they reside. For that reason the federal government in consultation with the provincial governments agreed to the provisions contained in subclause (4), which will prohibit any participant at governmental level from endangering the benefits proffered hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Mr. Grégoire: It is ten o'clock.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether, with the unanimous consent of the house, we might not see the clock for a few minutes.

Mr. Grégoire: It is ten o'clock.

Mr. Monteith: Mr. Chairman, we in this party are very pleased to agree that you should not see the clock for a few moments.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, we are very pleased to adopt the same attitude.

Mr. Grégoire: It is ten o'clock.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, while we are considering this bill in the sense that it will, upon passage, become a federal statute, we must realize that at the time it becomes effective it will no longer be federal because it cannot be changed or amended except with the concurrence of two thirds of the provinces representing that percentage of the population. Can two thirds of the provinces repre-

senting two thirds of the population initiate amendments to this legislation, or will such amendments have to be initiated at the federal level?

Miss LaMarsh: Mr. Chairman, at first thought my answer would be no. However, at least theoretically provincial governments could initiate and circulate amendments, and bring them to our attention, asking us to negotiate them. After all, this is federal legislation, and this is where amendments will have to be negotiated. I do not intend to mislead the house by saying that it is absolutely impossible for the federal government to ignore these requests, but as my hon. friends must all know, we cannot bind the next parliament, much less the parliament of 10, 20, 50 or 100 years from now. There is no question regarding whether the parliament of Canada can constitutionally amend this legislation by tearing out this subclause; but like the relationship between a husband and a wife, very often the vagaries of life become the normal and acceptable thing. This is not the kind of thing that any parliament we have had in the last 97 years including this one, would contemplate. There is no way by which we could adopt something absolutely binding on the provinces.

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Chairman, it is ten o'clock.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, I believe it has been well established that we in this party are in general support of the Canada pension plan, but I must say that we do not agree with clause 115. We do agree, however, with the philosophy espoused by the Minister of National Health and Welfare to the effect that funds of the Canada pension plan should not be raided by the government in an attempt to find some "goodies" just before an election. But what is involved in this clause is not something that relates just to the Canada pension plan, but rather what is involved is the whole concept of constitutional amendments. We are in effect trying to write into this one bill a formula that brings in the provinces and changes the whole basis of the enacting of legislation by the federal parliament. The minister in her first statement on this matter suggested that the reason for this was to protect the fund so that a government that was anxious to provide goodies at election time could not raid it; but then she admitted in her frank reply to the hon. member for Portage-Neepawa that clause 115 does not do that at